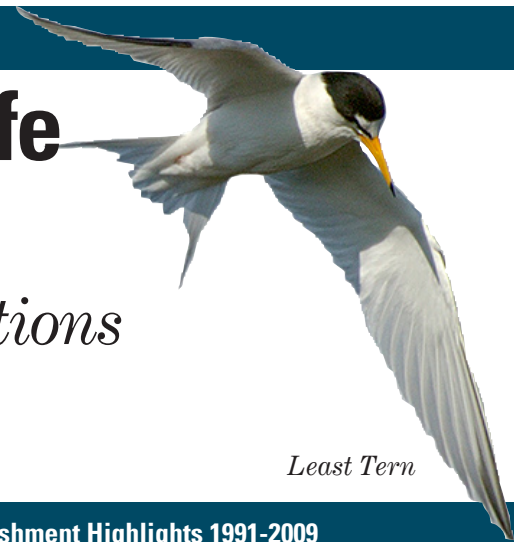


Partners for Fish and Wildlife in Connecticut

Restoring Habitat for Future Generations



Least Tern

Background

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (Partners Program) is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's most popular and effective program for voluntary, citizen and community-based fish and wildlife habitat restoration activities. The Partners Program serves as a bridge to owners and managers of private lands to develop partnerships for the benefit of federal trust species. The approach is simple: engage willing partners, through non-regulatory incentives, to conserve, restore and protect fish and wildlife habitat on their property. The Partners Program began in 1987 to help farmers restore degraded wetlands for wildlife; today it continues to grow with opportunities to restore wetland, riverine, and upland habitats.

Partners Program in Connecticut

The Partners Program in Connecticut is administered from the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in Westbrook, Connecticut. Since 1991, the Partners Program and Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection have worked together to protect and restore wetlands for the benefit of migratory birds and other wetland-associated wildlife. Habitat restoration in Connecticut has focused primarily on restoring degraded tidal salt marshes along the coast. Restoration activities have included removing old dredge spoil material to reestablish the original marsh elevation, replacing damaged or undersized culvert pipes, cleaning out existing ditches to reestablish tidal flow and selectively using herbicides in targeted areas to control less desirable, invasive plants such as phragmites.

Threats

Industrial, commercial and residential development have greatly impaired or eliminated coastal wetlands, especially saltmarshes in Connecticut. By the early 1900s, more than 50 percent of

Connecticut Partners Program Accomplishment Highlights 1991-2009

- Restored 301 acres of wetlands;
- Restored 380 acres of upland habitat;
- Partnered with landowners and partners to complete 32 projects.



USFWS

Protecting in-stream habitat for migratory fish is an important part of the Partner Program in Connecticut.



USFWS

Loss of coastal habitat threatens many shorebird species like nesting Piping Plover (eggs above) and terns.

Connecticut's coastal wetlands had been drained or filled for industry and development, resulting in a significant loss of habitat for many fish and wildlife species. Wetlands have been filled for construction of buildings, roads, and marinas. Saltmarshes have been ditched and drained for mosquito control and agricultural needs. Tidal streams have been gated to prevent normal tidal flows from flooding residential developments that were constructed in or near saltmarshes. Within the Connecticut Valley, many wetlands have been drained or modified for agricultural purposes.

Riparian areas have also been impacted. Streamside vegetation has been eliminated from livestock use and development. In-stream habitat of most of the large rivers has been impacted by dredging, sand and gravel mining and contaminated runoff from adjacent uplands. Hundreds of dams throughout the state obstruct migratory fish movement.

Urban development is a major threat to the health and productivity of 75 percent

of the freshwater streams and rivers that feed Long Island Sound. Invasive species often follow in the wake of urban development and threaten native species.

Conservation Strategies

Saltmarsh and Freshwater Marsh Restoration and Enhancement

Coastal habitat restoration has focused on restoring degraded tidal saltmarshes through a variety of techniques including dredge spoil removal, replacement of undersized culverts to provide adequate tidal exchange, and selective herbicides to control phragmites, an invasive grass. These integrated management techniques involve the creation of interconnected, shallow water channels and pannes (small, open water areas within a saltmarsh) in the marsh to reestablish the hydrology of the marsh and provide habitat for small fish that feed on mosquito larva.

Streamside Restoration and Enhancement

Livestock fencing, streambank stabilization (using bioengineering techniques), and streambank

revegetation are techniques used to restore riparian habitat in partnership with private landowners and other partners. Restoration of streamside forest habitats reduces runoff and erosion and improves the water quality in the streams. Forested riparian areas provide habitat for wildlife that depend on these areas for breeding and as dispersal corridors.

Fish Passage Restoration

The Partners Program in Connecticut is working with private landowners and the Connecticut Fisheries Division to remove dams that no longer provide public benefits, are in need of repair or pose a potential flood hazard. To date, 20 structures have been identified and their removal will reopen over 200 miles of riverine habitat to a variety of migratory fish species.

Grassland Restoration

The Partners Program is working with private landowners and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to restore grasslands using native grass seeding and late season brush-hogging (removing larger brush and saplings to set back vegetation to an early successional stage habitat) and mowing. Grassland habitat has declined greatly in New England as farmland has reverted to forest, causing significant declines in migratory bird species that depend on grassland and shrub/sapling habitats.

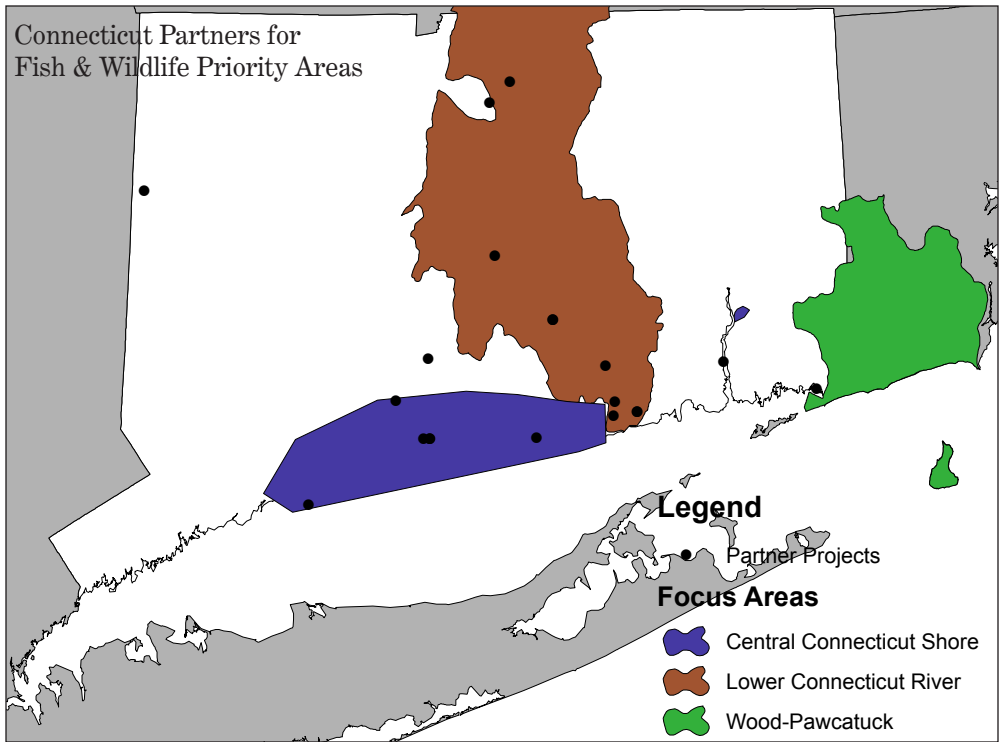
Cooperative Conservation

From 1991-2009 the Partner Program in Connecticut worked with partners and 32 projects in our focus areas. This work contributed to the protection, enhancement, or restoration of nearly 380 acres uplands and 301 acres of wetlands supporting dozens of migratory and federally protected species.



Jeff Nadler

Restoring grasslands habitat benefits grassland dependent species like the Eastern Meadowlark.



NOAA

The Partner Program works with partners to remove barriers to migratory fish like River herring.

For additional information or questions contact:

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